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AUTHOR Blackwell, Peggy J.; Diez, Mary
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ABSTRACT

Master's degrees, as currently configured, offer teachers routes out of the classroom. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is one of the efforts to address the current focus on teacher performance and preparation, and to help with the professionalization and the upgrading of the status of teachers. While traditionally the master's degree is seen as the way to climb the ladder from teaching to a more 'attractive' occupation, the new NBPTS standards provide clear and meaningful benchmarks for a new kind of master's degree. This degree would not focus on preparing teachers to leave the classroom, but on deepening teachers' understanding of content specific pedagogy with the aim of improving student achievement and learning. NBPTS will enable teachers to work as leaders and change agents, enabling them to more effectively work both with an increasingly diverse student population and with ever increasing layers of expectations for teachers and schools. Questions and issues that are critical to this discussion are posed, as are suggestions, recommendations and issues for a future action agenda. (Contains 31 references.) (SM)

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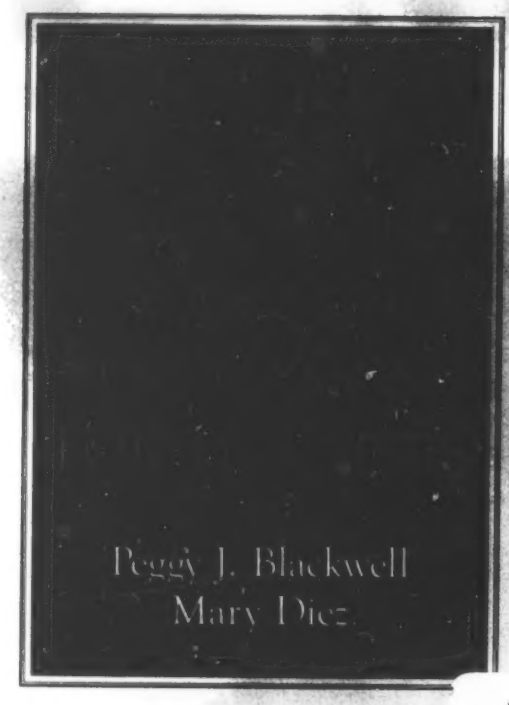

Peggy J. Blackwell
Mary Diez

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Toward a New Vision of Master's Education for Teachers

Peggy J. Blackwell, University of New Mexico
Mary Diez, Alverno College

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

NCATE/NBPTS Partnership for Graduate Programs

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Preface

New emphasis on student and teacher performance is profoundly influencing the ways that teachers are selected, prepared, licensed, and recognized. Policymakers now expect teachers and teacher candidates to show evidence of knowledge and skill and the ability to apply them to teach effectively.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has accomplished groundbreaking work in the development of standards for effective teaching in specific subject areas, and assessments geared to measure teacher performance against the standards.

The National Board's standards contain a vision of accomplished teaching that can become a framework for the redesign of advanced teacher development programs in universities.

NCATE is working in collaboration with the National Board to help institutions modify advanced programs so that they are aligned with NBPTS propositions for accomplished practice. The work is part of the National Partnership for Excellence in Accountability in Teaching (NPEAT) effort, established by the U. S. Department of Education as a collaborative to enhance quality in teaching and teacher preparation.

The NCATE/NBPTS partnership encourages schools of education to develop standards-based master's degree programs designed to help teachers improve their practice and develop the tools to better assess their own effectiveness. Unlike many current master's programs that focus on process, the revised master's programs will be geared specifically to improving the art of teaching, which in turn, will aid student learning.

The project draws school personnel into partnerships with institutions of higher education, creating new higher education and school faculty roles, new opportunities for research, and new structures within the school, college, or department of education and the P-12 school.

There is currently no one best way for higher education institutions to align their advanced master's degree programs with NBPTS standards. Nor are there comprehensive models from which to learn what works best. As more institutions develop their own models and share their successes and experiences, many institutions will be able to draw from an expanding knowledge base.

This paper, "Toward a New Vision of Master's Education for Teachers," presents a compelling argument that master's degrees, as most of

them are currently configured, offer teachers routes out of the classroom. Why is this the case? The development of the master's degree in education sprang from a perception of teaching as the occupation of a semi-professional, who would, upon attaining a master's, climb the ladder to more "attractive" occupations.

With the new focus on teacher performance and teacher preparation, and policymaker demands for increased accountability, many efforts are being made to upgrade the status of teaching. The creation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is one of those efforts.

The Board has developed standards and assessments to guide the practice of accomplished teaching. The authors argue that these standards and assessments provide clear and meaningful benchmarks for a new kind of master's degree. The new master's would focus not on preparing teachers to move out of the classroom, but on improving their ability to teach all students effectively. The master's degree would provide intensive study that deepens teacher knowledge of content-specific pedagogy with the aim of improving student achievement and learning.

This paper moves the field forward as it brings to the fore the need for redesign of advanced teacher development programs and poses a framework from which to approach restructuring.

Boyce Williams, Vice President for Institutional Relations, NCATE

Jane Leibbrand, Vice President for Communications, NCATE

Editors

Introduction

The specific purpose of this paper is to provide background for thinking through a new approach to master's education for practicing teachers. We approach this from the disparate backgrounds of a large public research university and a small liberal arts private college. We both are from a school, college or department of education (SCDE) that has engaged in reform of initial teacher education, and we both have the experience of serving as dean; one of us has substantial experience with the creation of a new master's degree program. We both have actively supported the work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and are strong advocates for accreditation of SCDEs. We found, after the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education asked us to co-author this paper, that our thinking and our philosophies regarding master's education were considerably similar, and that we worry about the same things. We knew that some of the strongest critics of master's education are within the profession, with some calling for the elimination of master's degrees in education unless they can be made relevant to the work of the profession. We found that we were concerned that SCDEs will wait to reform master's education until it is too late, knowing well that there are strong advocates for alternatives to university-based advanced education.

Our intent in this paper is to provide a common base of information and a set of issues and questions to launch a discussion on master's education that is benchmarked on the standards of the National Board. While we will argue that the current focus on professionalism in teaching calls for a concerted effort to examine critically master's education, it is not the purpose of this paper to resolve questions, or to be prescriptive, but to provoke substantive conversations about master's education.

We first address the emergence of a focus on the professionalism of teaching from *A Nation Prepared* (1986) to *What Matters Most* (1996). Then we examine issues of master's education generally in higher education and the status of master's degrees in SCDEs. The next section considers key issues and challenges to SCDEs for master's education and continuing professional development of educators, followed by a section reviewing suggested criteria for master's education. We argue that standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and its assessment processes provide clear and meaningful benchmarks for a new kind of master's degree. This new master's would not focus on preparing teachers to move out of the classroom, but on deepening their understanding of content and pedagogy and developing their ability to work as

We appreciate the elegant editing and suggestions made by Professor Pauline Turner, University of New Mexico.

leaders and agents of change, enabling them to work more effectively with an increasingly diverse student body and ever increasing layers of expectations for the schools. Finally, we pose questions and issues we believe to be critical to the discussion and invite explicit suggestions, recommendations, and issues that will serve as the basis for a future action agenda.

Professionalization of Teaching

Throughout the numerous reports addressing needs of schools at the close of the twentieth century is this common theme: Today's schools require more knowledgeable, skilled, and flexible teachers. Teachers can no longer close the door of their classrooms and ignore the pressures from outside. State requirements in the form of student performance on assessments, as well as community and family issues that affect student learning, challenge teachers—individually and collectively—to demonstrate exemplary professional preparation and continuous development.

In the decade between the publication of *A Nation Prepared* (1986) and *What Matters Most* (1996), the professionalization agenda of *A Nation Prepared* has been pursued with an energy unrivaled in the history of American education. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, which produced *A Nation Prepared*, called for, among other proposals, the creation of "...a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, organized with a regional and state membership structure, to establish high standards for what teachers need to know and be able to do, and to certify teachers who meet that standard" (1986, p. 55). *What Matters Most* outlines the development, ten years after *A Nation Prepared*, of a clearer continuum of preparation for teaching. This continuum consists of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) setting standards for initial teacher preparation, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) providing benchmark standards and assessment processes to guide state licensure of new teachers, and the National Board certifying accomplished teachers after three or more years of teaching practice. *What Matters Most* calls for strengthening this continuum both through explicit policy initiatives at the state level and the efforts of institutions of higher education (IHEs) to work with local colleagues in the P-16 community.

The professionalization agenda described in these two documents also addressed the problem of keeping good teachers in the classroom. Noting that teachers are expected to perform the same job on their first day in the classroom and on their last day before retirement, *A Nation Prepared* suggested several elements related to a "career ladder" for

teachers that involves, for example, efforts to—

- ❖ restructure schools to provide a professional environment for teachers, freeing them to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding them accountable for student progress;

- ❖ restructure the teaching force, and introduce a new category of Lead Teachers with the proven ability to provide leadership in the redesign of the schools and to help their colleagues uphold high standards of learning and teaching; and

- ❖ make teachers' salaries and career opportunities competitive with those in other professions (1986, pp. 55-56).

Colleges of education, perhaps unintentionally, have contributed to the career ladder problem, with an emphasis on master's programs that focus on leadership outside the classroom.

Finally, emphasis on the professionalization of teaching has led some in teacher education to begin to explore the meaning of the concept of teaching as a profession and teachers as professionals. Lee Shulman, in the Hunt Lecture at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education annual meeting in 1998, outlined six principles that can guide the exploration of how master's programs might contribute to the professionalization of teaching:

- ❖ *Obligations of service to others.* Shulman argues that teachers must be technically and morally grounded; as professionals, they are granted autonomy because society needs the service that they offer.

- ❖ *Understanding of scholarly and theoretical foundations.* Shulman notes that a *sine qua non* of a profession is the knowledge base(s) that guides practice.

- ❖ *Skilled practice and performance.* According to Shulman, "Although a significant portion of the knowledge base is developed in the academy, it is not professional knowledge until enacted in the crucible of the field."

- ❖ *Exercise of judgment under conditions of unavoidable uncertainty.* If either theory or practice were able to operate by itself, Shulman argues, we would not need professionals. It is the tension be-

tween the two that allows the professional to intuit, discern, and decide how best to act when "design and chance collide."

- *Ability to learn from experience.* And, he adds, professionals are able to be thoughtful about the consequences of the collision between design and chance. Their reflection leads to new learning.

- *Professional community to monitor quality.* Shulman argues for this final point by noting that learning from individual experience is not enough to guide the work of the practicing professional. Only a well-functioning professional community, one that shares its learning from experience through professional discourse, can responsibly serve the public.

As we move into our examination of master's programs in education, we will return to the notion of professionalism and the professionalization of teaching.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

Because the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) focuses on accomplished teaching, its standards are appropriate for examination in relationship to the development of a professional master's degree for teachers. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, governed by a 63-member Board of Directors (the majority of whom are practicing teachers), was established in 1987. By 1989, a policy statement, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*, had been developed, describing the Board's vision of accomplished practice. Such accomplished practice is recognized through National Board certification as an emblem of teaching excellence. Grounded on rigorous standards for professional teaching excellence for experienced teachers, the system of national certification is voluntary, national, and complementary to state licensing systems. National Board certification is not an end unto itself; rather, it is a mechanism for experienced teachers to enhance their professional skills and abilities.

National Board certification recognizes that the systems and policies governing teacher licensure do not sufficiently distinguish or encourage the career continuum of professional teachers. By developing explicit standards for elementary and secondary teaching fields, the National Board's intent is to ensure that teachers who become Board-certified will reflect the highest levels of accomplishment that promote high standards of student learning.

The Board adopted five core propositions, shown in Table 1. In its assessment process, the Board requires candidates to submit a portfolio documenting their work with students at the school site. In addition, candidates participate in a daylong assessment center process in which they respond to prompts related both to their subject area and to subject-specific pedagogy.

Table 1. Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

1) Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers recognize individual differences in their students and adjust their practice accordingly.
- Teachers have an understanding of how students develop and learn.
- Teachers treat students equitably.
- Teachers' mission extends beyond understanding the cognitive capacity of their students.

2) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Teachers appreciate how knowledge in their subjects is created, organized, and linked to other disciplines.
- Teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey a subject to students.
- Teachers generate multiple paths to knowledge.

3) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- Teachers call on multiple methods to meet their goals.
- Teachers orchestrate learning in group settings.
- Teachers place a premium on student engagement.
- Teachers regularly assess student progress.
- Teachers are mindful of their principal objectives.

4) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experiences.
- Teachers are continually making difficult choices that test their judgment.
- Teachers seek the advice of others and draw on education research and scholarship to improve their practice.

5) Teachers are members of learning communities.
- Teachers contribute to school effectiveness by collaborating with other professionals.
- Teachers work collaboratively with parents.
- Teachers take advantage of community resources.

The Master's Degree in Education

The Council of Graduate Schools commissioned a major study of master's education in the early 1990s, resulting in *A Silent Success* (Conrad, Haworth & Millar, 1993). We have drawn on their study and the subsequent work, *Emblems of Quality in Higher Education* (Haworth & Conrad, 1997) in this paper, with appreciation for their cogent analysis of standards and issues.

A review of the education reform literature in the various commission reports and reform documents reveals little to no discussion or consideration of the role of the master's degree in education, in spite of the tenacious concentration on the professional development of teachers. Harry Judge provided a brief study of graduate education in graduate schools of education that was less than complimentary of the quality of the programs (1982). We believe it important to summarize briefly the history of the master's degree to provide a sense of the historical trends that have influenced its development, before we identify the current issues and concerns that should be addressed in the design of a new master's degree for the teaching profession.

Historical Perspective

Master's education was associated originally with pedagogy, offered in a prescriptive manner for the church to license its teachers; the first master's degree curriculum was documented at the University of Paris around 1215 (Butts, 1939). In this country, Harvard began to award the master's degree in the seventeenth century for young men seeking teaching positions following completion of the degree, with the Master of Arts signifying a master teacher (Butts, 1939). While the master's degree came to include requirements over the next century such as a year in residence under the guidance of a master teacher, it essentially was an unearned degree given for a fee (Butts, 1939; Walters, 1965). By the end of the 18th century, according to Conrad and Eagan (1990), the master's degree was no longer a symbol of achievement, leading to major efforts to restore the prestige of the degree in the mid- to late-1800s. The degree once again gained a measure of prestige when the University of Michigan awarded an earned master's with specific courses in 1859, and by 1900, the master's degree was well established in the American degree structure (Conrad & Eagan, 1990).

During the late 1800s, the university system as we know it began to emerge, influenced by the corporate emphasis on efficiency that had such an impact on public education. The groundwork for the present tier of universities was established during this period with the concomitant rise

of graduate education and emphasis on research, and the practice of separate deans for graduate education emerged along with the rise of the university system. Yale University awarded the first Ph.D. in 1861, and by 1876 that degree began to be acknowledged as the culmination of advanced education (Butts, 1939).

Parallel to the emergence of the research-oriented Ph.D. and arts and sciences master's degrees, the professions now established in the university system — such as education, engineering, agriculture, pharmacy, and social work — began to focus on postbaccalaureate graduate education around the turn of the century. According to Conrad et al., (1993), education was the "first major professional field" (p. 7) to emphasize the master's degree. Other professions soon followed, and the terminal master's degree was introduced. Conrad and Eagan's study of the master's degree (1990) revealed that public school personnel earned approximately 75 percent of the masters' degrees in liberal arts, and about three-fifths of all master's degrees in 1940 were awarded to employees of public and private school systems. They concluded that, by 1970, the master's degree had become primarily an "instrument for certifying students for careers in public and private sectors" (p. 113). Professional degrees became more flexible than the traditional arts and sciences master's by serving part-time students, emphasizing both theory and practice, and using varied modes of instructional delivery (Nyre & Reilly, 1979), factors that increased the popularity of the degree.

Historians note the critical role that was played by the American Association of Universities (AAU) during the period from 1900 to 1945. In meetings and publications, the AAU expressed concern about the purpose, meaning, and quality of master's education. Some of the concerns are similar to those related to education master's programs today, and include such issues as permitting students to take correspondence courses or recognizing extension work as part of the degree (Slichter, 1927). A major study of the master's degree, commissioned by AAU, raised questions about pursuing a master's degree in the year following the bachelor's degree and its impact on the quality and purpose of subsequent master's degrees (Thomas, 1910). This question is particularly significant to the field of education today, both to the original Holmes Group's design of preservice that ends with a master's degree (1986) and to other models for extended programs, such as the practice in some SCDEs of awarding a master's degree during the first year of induction into the profession.

The AAU Committee on Graduate Work in 1945 was pointedly critical of the diversity of standards for the master's degree, including admission requirements, degree credit for undergraduate (or cross-listed)

courses, and undue emphasis on factual knowledge—again foreshadowing concerns about education programs in the 1990s. The Committee determined that the M.A. and the M.S. would be primarily research degrees; that the M.A.T. and the M.Ed. would be primarily teaching degrees, and that technical subjects such as engineering should offer the M.A. or M.S. followed by a professional modifier. It also recommended that no credit be accepted for correspondence or extension courses and that a culminating experience be required. Observing that the master's has become a consolation prize, a steppingstone to the Ph.D. or a terminal degree, Glazer (1986) commented that the master's degree in education is also a form of "legal tender" for teachers for state license and salary requirements (p. 30).

Enrollment Trends

Degrees at the master's level in all fields accelerated in popularity, going from about 1,500 conferred degrees in 1900 to 27,000 by 1940 (AAU, 1945, p. 112). Of the master's degrees in 1940, 9,500 (35 percent) were in education (AAU, 1945, p. 112). By 1961-1962, the number of master's degrees earned in all fields had risen to approximately 80,000, and 621 institutions awarded the master's, with many former teacher's colleges introducing the degree (Snell, 1965, p. 83, 98). Over the next ten years (1960-1970) the number of degrees awarded each year rose at an astonishing rate to more than 208,000 in 1970-1971 (NCES, 1997, p. 268), and 1995 saw 397,629 master's degrees awarded (NCES, 1997, p. 268).

Between 1940 and 1960, the number of degrees offered by professional fields increased. By 1962, about 42 percent of the degree recipients were in education (Snell, 1965, p. 83); however, as other professional fields continued to emphasize the master's degree, education's "share" declined, and education accounted for only 26 percent of all master's degrees in 1993-1994 (NCES, 1997, pp. 279-280).

Data indicate that 101,242 master's degrees were awarded in education in 1994-1995 (as compared to 106,079 bachelor's degrees in education), with 71 percent of the degrees awarded by public institutions (NCES, 1997, p. 309, 286). There were 60 degree specialty fields in education in 1994-1995 (NCES, 1997, pp. 272-273).[1] The expansion of the number of specialty fields has been noted in various documents about graduate education (Whaley, 1966; Clark, 1979; Mayhew & Ford, 1974; Glazer, 1986). Whaley, for example, said that the "cluttering-up" of degree titles with specialty fields "is particularly notable in education…" (p. 530).

[1] The total of 60 specialty fields does not include areas often administered by SCDEs. Notably, these include Home Economics, which incorporates Family Studies, and Parks and Recreation, which incorporates Health and Physical Education. With those fields, the number of degree specialties rises to 74.

The number of conferred master's degrees in education showed a steady increase from approximately 24 percent of all education degrees awarded in 1950 (NCES, 1997, p. 309) to about 50 percent of all education degrees in 1980 (Golladay, 1983). By 1994-1995, master's degrees had dropped to about 42 percent of the total degrees awarded in education.

The absolute numbers (NCES, 1997, p. 309) reveal that 20,069 master's degrees in education were conferred in 1949-1950; the number continued to increase to a high of 126,061 in 1975-1976, after which there was a steady decline to 74,045 in 1986-1987. Since then, the number of master's degrees awarded again has steadily increased to 101,242 in 1994-1995.

Feistritzer (1984) cited data showing that of the 1,287 SCDEs, 682 offered the master's degree (p. 81). By 1993-1994, the number of SCDEs offering the master's had risen to 829, divided almost evenly between public and private institutions (NCES, 1997, p. 289). From informal accounts, this number continues to grow each year.

Master's Education – Issues and Concerns

In spite of increasing popularity, the master's continues to be criticized for its lack of prestige and quality, as well as lack of clear definition and purpose (Veysey, 1965; Conrad & Eagan, 1990; Conrad et al., 1993). As noted above, the variety of degree specialties has expanded to the point that Glazer (1986) concluded that the master's had become "a generic degree of such diversity" that it had no single definition of structure, content, or goals (p. 19).

Other forces also have contributed to the lack of focus in master's education for teachers. During the last twenty years many states have initiated policies requiring teachers to update their licenses by taking additional coursework—often without specifying either the content focus or the quality of such coursework. One consequence is that master's programs have become defined as the completion of a specific number of credits from a collection of courses, rather than a coherent program leading to a meaningful degree. In addition, states and/or districts have rewarded teachers for the number of graduate credits they complete by guaranteeing acceleration in the salary schedule, often regardless of either course content or teacher performance. These licensing policies and political considerations have resulted in a proliferation of courses in education that are designed more for convenience than for enhanced professional development. We are particularly distressed by the increasing prevalence of the "drive-by" degree. As one teacher educator in a large public institution put it, many master's programs have lost their

integrity as academic and professional study: "It's preservice warmed over. If you apply, you get in; and if you get in, you get out."

The last five years have seen some state legislatures and/or state licensing units intruding into the substance of advanced professional development for teachers, either by restricting or stipulating what can be taken for an advanced degree, by mandating reform of master's degrees, or by discontinuing the requirement for a master's degree for salary enhancement in favor of nonacademic vendor-type models. State regulations for teacher licensure cannot be taken lightly or viewed as a peripheral issue. Nor can it be automatically assumed that state systems are equipped or interested in enforcing high standards for advanced professional development. It is incumbent upon SCDEs to acknowledge the problem, identify the issues, and make the changes necessary to convince state and national policy makers that academic master's programs are worthy of support and investment.

Another consequence of teacher licensing policies and state/district incentives is that teachers often opt for advanced work in other fields, options supported and often encouraged by SCDEs. In her analysis of the education master's, Glazer (1986) argues that by providing routes out of the classroom, SCDEs offer a "...bewildering array of choices on a negative unifying principle" of encouraging teachers to leave the classroom (p. 59), essentially negating the purpose of teacher education around which the education school was created. In Judge's opinion, the SCDE serves as "an escalator by which one climbs from teaching to other, superior or more attractive occupations" due to the "inexorable logic of the market [that] has obliged them to ... distance themselves from the contaminating world of practice and training" (p. 40).

The previous discussion implies a multi-layered set of issues affecting master's education in the U.S. and, consequently, suggests that any attempts to reform master's education will require attention to multiple factors, not all of which are under the control of the SCDEs. However, we suggest two approaches to address these issues. The first has to do with issues of reputation and status in the academy, and the second with criteria that can guide the development of quality master's programs for practicing teachers. Both can be informed and supported by the work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, through its standards documents and its processes. We believe that careful attention to the second approach will enhance the ability to impact SCDE reputation and status, as well as the reputation and status of teaching.

Reputation and Status of SCDEs

The first factor to be addressed in the reform of the master's of education is the reputation and status of SCDEs. Judge (1982) concluded that graduate schools of education were more concerned with the doctorate than with the master's, and both Judge and Glazer (1986) observe that the master's in education does not have the same status as the M.B.A. Judge further commented that the poor reputation of SCDEs is due in large measure to lack of central focus or mission, leading to their being accepted as neither arts and sciences nor as a professional school, a view supported by Glazer (1986).

While we agree with Judge and Glazer that part of the poor reputation of SCDEs is due to their lack of central focus or mission, we also note that Goodlad's (1990) assessment of the "chronic prestige deprivation" of SCDEs links it to assumptions about the value of teaching in P-12 schools (p. xiii). In fact, Judge (1982) indirectly acknowledges this, saying that "little prestige attaches to the role of the teacher and correspondingly little to his or her education and training." (p. 46) For too many years, SCDEs have attempted to gain status in the university by making their work more like that of their arts and sciences colleagues. The issue, we believe, is related to the confusion of SCDEs about whether they are professional schools offering professional degrees or whether they are conglomerates of programs tangentially related to education. Indeed, some aspects of the study of schooling and policy issues can be approached in ways that draw upon the arts and sciences. But the study of schools and teaching might more appropriately be approached with hands-on work to improve the practice of education in real-world schools in communities of all sizes. Both Judge (1982) and Glazer (1986) suggest that a distinction must be made between master's degrees developed in an arts and sciences model and professional master's degrees, both preferring the professional degree for SCDEs. That opinion is echoed by Clifford and Guthrie (1988), who present a strong argument on behalf of professional degrees, where the professional master's degree would be more like the M.B.A. in a business school, focused on both specialized theoretical and applied knowledge.

We suspect that gender-related issues also may impact the problem of status, i.e., the fact that teaching in P-12 settings is viewed as a women's profession. Thus, the move to professional school status may not automatically align teacher education in stature with business, law, and medicine. Nevertheless, it is entirely possible for teacher educators in SCDEs to begin to own their context and their appropriate scholarship to focus on the practice of teaching across P-12 and higher education. Efforts to do so are supported and encouraged by Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsid-*

ered (1990) and by AAHE's work in the development of teaching in arts and sciences, and will be supported by Shulman's efforts as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Criteria to Guide the Development of the Education Master's Degree

Drawing upon Conrad et al. (1993), we suggest six criteria for the development of master's programs for teachers. In Glazer's terms, this will be a professional practice-oriented, experiential degree program (1986). We believe that these criteria are compatible with standards of the National Board and will show, in the next section, how National Board standards and processes can be used in the design of master's programs that meet these criteria. We understand that different institutions will implement these standards and criteria in different ways to take advantage of the particular culture and needs of their SCDEs.

1) Does the SCDE have a commitment to the implementation of a quality master's program?

We view this criterion as the pivotal issue in the development of the new master's degree. Too often, education degrees are criticized for lack of quality, even by our own faculty and by the students who have completed the degree. We believe it is an opportune time for serious and sustained attention to issues of quality in master's education to establish firmly the role and the ability of SCDEs to make a major contribution to the advanced education of experienced teachers.

A new master's program must be linked clearly to standards that can be evaluated. Intellectual challenge to students should be woven throughout the fabric of the program. Faculty must establish a unity of purpose for the degree—a collective ownership (Conrad et al., 1993). We suggest that the National Board's standards are a logical set of standards that has wide acceptance around which to structure the purpose and ownership of the degree program. Using these standards as benchmarks will enable a "clear and unambiguous message" about "what is important and valued" in the program (Conrad et al., 1993, p. 296). Improvement of teaching practice is one goal for the degree; to accomplish this goal, the program must emphasize the significance of assessment and reflection that is iterative in a manner that encourages continual feedback and improvement.

We have noted that the master's degree is all too often simply a collection of courses, frequently developed by and for the individual

faculty who teach them. While faculty should be responsible for the development of the new type of master's degree we describe, they should develop it collaboratively with liberal arts and P-12 colleagues creating a coherent, planned, and sequential curriculum. To accomplish this goal, faculty must address issues of core and specialized course work, as well as specialized theoretical and applied knowledge. Glazer (1986) emphasizes the importance of integrating experiences to synthesize content and translate theory into practice. The core is especially important, because it provides all students with the "broad understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and practices" of the field (Conrad et al., 1993, p. 299). Conrad et al. also recommend an intense, immersion-type learning situation, a recommendation we believe is especially compatible with the standards and Shulman's principles of professionalism. The implementation of nontraditional weekend intensive courses is one strategy frequently used to accomplish the immersion experience.

Glazer (1986), in her in-depth study of master's education, found that strong master's programs require study of a specialized subfield, often outside the unit offering the degree. Because the NBPTS includes both emphasis on teaching and emphasis on content knowledge, the specialized subfield offers an opportunity for collaboration with arts and sciences or fine arts faculty on cognate courses outside the SCDE.

2) Does the master's program have coherent requirements?

Important to coherence are such aspects as admissions, advisement, comprehensive examinations, and culminating experiences that are designed especially for the program. Attention to quality demands admissions requirements that enable selection of candidates who will benefit most from the program. Such requirements can be tailored to reflect the attributes that are correlated with success in the program, such as a teaching portfolio, analysis of a case study, and so on. High value can be placed on admitting students who bring a passion for teaching and learning and varied experiential backgrounds (Haworth & Conrad, 1997).

A thesis as the culminating product of the master's degree has increasingly become less common, replaced by other types of activities. In this program, an action research project or a portfolio as the culminating experience is a logical product. Action research projects can contrast with theses in several ways, focusing on the teacher's own classroom practice, being developed with on-site collaborators, and finally, being shared in a public forum.

The role of inquiry and research is a significant issue in the design of a professional practice-oriented program. Inquiry and research should

not be seen as the province of arts and sciences model degrees. Storr (1973) argues that inquiry is an integral aspect of any master's degree and that use of a professional practice-oriented degree "does not mean that a particular degree cannot legitimately reflect the fact that the university expects the recipients to apply their education in a profession" (p. 85). In development of this master's, faculty have the opportunity to think through issues, using the propositions and standards of NBPTS as benchmarks, about the types of projects they want students to accomplish that will mesh with the program's goals. Inasmuch as this is a professional degree with the aim of improving professional practice, such reports and projects can emphasize collaboration, reflection, and real-world issues in research and inquiry. As Clifford and Guthrie (1988) stated, "A professional school's responsibility is to work with practitioners in ways that enrich their wisdom" (p. 352). They discuss the notion of collaborating on "discovered problems" and "presented problems" as real possibilities for research and inquiry that could be considered in the development of this master's degree.

3) Does the master's demonstrate a participatory culture?

As a sense of program ownership is essential to quality, so too are shared program goals and agreement on direction essential for establishing a participatory culture. Some students and faculty in institutions of higher education have come to believe that they can take "the easy way out"—the drive-though degree, credit for life-experience, taking courses that have little purpose or relevance, and teaching the same content in the same ways year after year. We seek, and advocate, a higher standard—a community of learning peopled by a community of learners who come together for a shared moral purpose: to improve teaching and learning. And, as Shulman's professionalism framework would suggest, a community of learning also reaches out to the larger community in professional discourse, in order to test its ideas against those of others. To accomplish this goal, both faculty and students will have to engage in some risk-taking, for how else can we in SCDEs hope to prepare future instructional leaders and change agents if we are unwilling to model the very actions and beliefs we seek to instill?

Another aspect of the participatory culture is the involvement of stakeholders in program development. Students, too, must have a common understanding of the the program's intent, so that they can "knit together" their learning experiences (Haworth & Conrad, 1997, p. 65). Haworth and Conrad found it necessary but not sufficient to have collegial and collaborative interactions, for a key aspect of a true learning community is the camaraderie of the faculty and the "sense of student community" (p. 73).

4) Does the master's degree program have engaged and diverse faculty and students?

Faculty involvement and commitment are key aspects of a quality master's program. One component of faculty commitment is an active interest in the students in the program and a willingness to devote time to student issues. A critical mass of committed faculty, with at least one faculty member who is willing to serve as leader and advocate, is essential for the health of a master's program that will maintain the other criteria we identify.

Diversity among the faculty creates a definite strength for the program not only in race and ethnicity, but in background and experience. Participation of some faculty who have firsthand knowledge of how theories and practices work in the field is a necessary component of a professional degree program.

A committed, engaged, and diverse student body also is an indispensable component of a quality program. Such a student body lends strength and credibility to the program, helping to nurture its development and evolution. Interestingly, Conrad et al. (1993) found that quality master's programs defined "good" students, not through attributes such as GRE scores and GPA, but by commitment, diversity, and experience, which represents both culture and work background.

5) Does the master's program engage in interactive teaching and learning?

In a new design of master's education compatible with National Board standards, learning must be an active process. As Conrad et al. (1993) state, students need to learn in their courses about the "messy" problems they face in the work of professional practice (p. 300). Shulman (1998) explains it as the work that allows the professional to transform solid theoretical knowledge into professional knowledge through enacting it "in the crucible of the field."

Critical dialogue is a distinctive feature of quality master's degree programs (Haworth & Conrad, 1997), whereby faculty and students together question core assumptions and extant knowledge. Through such interactive teaching and learning, both students and faculty come to a richer understanding of both theory and professional practice and students "[have] far richer learning experiences that noticeably enhance[d] their growth and development" (p. 83). We believe that such interactive teaching and learning is a hallmark of the National Board standards.

Mentoring is another important feature of quality programs, which includes such activities as individualized advisement and direct feedback (Haworth & Conrad, 1997). The mentoring that Haworth and Conrad found to be especially significant included 1) individual interest in students' careers with goals and courses of study tailored to meet career needs, 2) periodic individual instruction designed to improve knowledge and professional practice, and 3) regular feedback on professional skill development.

The opportunity for students to contribute to and support the development of other professionals also is a significant component of quality programs. Here, students have both formal activities and informal occasions where they collaborate and interact with other students. Called cooperative peer learning by Haworth and Conrad (1997), we believe this type of activity contributes to adult learning. However, it does not mean that students have the major responsibility to teach and advise one another; effective adult learning using this approach requires active involvement in formal settings by the faculty involved.

Out-of-class activities also form consequential learning experiences and complete the idea of a whole learning context, from brown-bag seminars, to colloquia, to visiting speakers at the IHE or a school district. Social events assist in creating a sense of community and become learning opportunities.

6) Does the master's program have sufficient resources for a quality program?

It is impossible to have a high quality program without institutional support at both the department and upper administrative levels. This support includes appropriate recognition of work in a professional master's program through merit, promotion, and tenure standards and policies—this cannot be overemphasized. Institutional support typically is construed to mean money, and it does, but authentic institutional support is money and more, including promotion and tenure and recognition of the importance of the work at the master's level. Master's work is not a lesser undertaking, or a stepping stone to the doctorate, or a consolation prize. It is, on its own merit (or it could be), a worthy endeavor for accomplished professionals who seek to improve their practice.

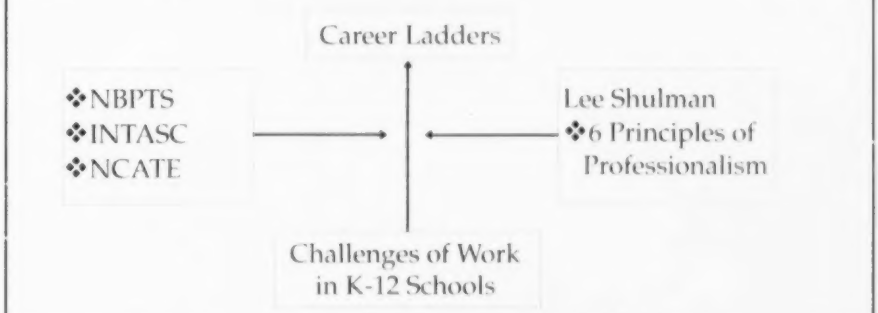
Using the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and its Assessment Processes to Benchmark a New Kind of Master's Degree

Using the standards and the assessment processes created for National Board certification could help teacher educators address a number of the problems we have identified in the mismatch between teacher professionalization and the "meaningless" hodgepodge that is much of master's education in the United States. Note that we are *not* suggesting a master's degree designed to help teachers *attain* National Board certification. Rather, our argument is that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and teacher education programs have similar goals: in both cases they seek to extend practicing teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and to refine the application of such advanced knowledge in accomplished teaching. It may be true that completion of a master's degree program with a clear focus on the goal identified above would assist teachers to be more successful in standing for National Board certification, but that result would be a by-product of their having developed as teachers rather than the focus of such a program.

Template v. Benchmark

Both agendas—the professionalization of teaching and the reform of master's education for teachers—seek to extend practicing teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and to refine the application of such advanced knowledge in accomplished teaching. What should be the relationship between the two agendas? We propose thinking about the mutual influence of the two agendas by contrasting the use of the National Board standards as a template for a new master's degree with the use of the standards and processes as benchmarks for the development of a new master's degree, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Professionalization of Teaching



A "template" approach would develop a master's program using the language of the National Board standards by developing courses designed to address the standards and preparing for the types of assessment used to certify accomplished teachers. The benefit of this approach, of course, is its clear relationship to the standards of the National Board. However, there are also dangers. First, the standards and processes were not developed to serve the design of a master's degree. Second, using the standards and processes as a template cannot address the degree-related issues discussed above, nor would doing so promote solid ownership on the part of the SCDE faculty. Third, using a template approach does little to encourage change of the established habits and culture of the academy. Innovations taken "whole" from a source are rarely integrated into the life of an institution and, indeed, at least one master's program developed from the template of the National Board was discontinued when the person who had served as its advocate retired.

A "benchmark" approach, in contrast, creates its own "shape" and then uses the target as a "foil" to examine the design and implementation. In this approach, a graduate faculty would develop a master's program focused on extending teachers' knowledge and professional practice and then use the National Board standards and assessment processes to critique the program. Ideally, the graduate faculty would pursue the design of the degree program in collaboration with local colleagues in P-12 schools and subject area colleagues from their own campuses. The National Board standards for various age levels and content specializations would then be drawn upon to examine the program's design. We acknowledge that use of a benchmark approach is not a decision made easily, as tensions among faculty and between faculty and administration will result from moving into a new model for the master's degree.

Some programs have used this approach. For example, while the Alverno conceptualization, completed in 1984, predates the National Board, the faculty used the standards of the National Board as a benchmark once they were available. They found a strong correspondence between their description of the "experienced" and "advanced" teacher and that of the Board's "accomplished teacher." By creating their own conceptualization, faculty are likely to capture elements that characterize their particular approaches to teaching in the context of their institutions and local areas. They also are more likely to be committed to the program based upon such a conceptualization than to one imposed from outside, and they are more likely to make changes in the organizational culture that support the program changes.

The notions of template and benchmark are not mutually exclusive. It would be possible for faculty designing graduate programs to begin

with the National Board's standards and processes and, in their development of a master's program, also to consider a range of factors that lead to local adaptations. Nonetheless, we want to reiterate the meaning of our set of criteria: A high quality master's degree program requires serious commitment on the part of college/university faculty to design, implement, and sustain the program in ways that meet the spirit of the professionalization agenda.

Content and Pedagogy as Essential Elements

Focusing on the professional development of teachers whose goal is to remain in the classroom most likely would require, as described in a proposal by Gary Galluzzo (1997) for such a program at George Mason University, attention to an "education core" as well as to continued development in one's specialty, e.g., early childhood education, technology, or subject areas such as English, history, science, and social studies. The former would incorporate, according to Galluzzo, a focus on inquiry through classroom-based action research. Included in Alverno's core, consistent with the conceptualization for the program, is a strong focus on developmental and cognitive theory as well as inquiry.

Processes

One major change for many institutions seeking to focus on a professional master's degree for teachers will be the adoption of a new set of processes for teaching, learning, and assessment in the new master's degree. As we pointed out in an earlier section of this paper, many master's programs (much like undergraduate programs) have been developed as a collection of courses rather than as a means to develop a practicing professional. Shifting the focus from the dissemination of information to the development of the person can be facilitated by a number of processes that are compatible with National Board practice. The examples we use here draw upon the following processes, the first two related to the practices engaged in by faculty and students in the program.

- *The standards development process.* National Board standards have been and are being developed by practitioners and other persons knowledgeable in both content and pedagogy appropriate to the developmental level of the learner. Standards committees draw upon the work of the learned societies, e.g., the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, etc., and multiple reviewers provide comment on the development standards over the course of often years of development. Faculty designing master's programs

should similarly involve practitioners as well as subject matter experts, resources from the learned societies as well as university documents, and a range of reviewers who can provide useful feedback in the development process. Such a process of standards development is compatible with the suggested Master's Degree Criteria 1, 2, and 3 described on pages 12-14 of this paper, as well as Criterion 6 on page 16 of this paper.

❖ *The assessment development practice.* NBPTS assessments, too, are developed through the involvement of practitioners with persons knowledgeable about content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, assessment design, and psychometric theory. Assessment development involves both pilot and field testing, attention to measurement issues and equity issues, and concern for the consequences of the assessment for the profession's sense of the meaning of accomplished teaching. Broad working groups review all stages of development. Faculty designing master's programs must pay careful attention to the development of assessments, not only in the content and format of their designs, but in their adherence to criteria for valid, reliable, and fair assessment practice. Again, such a process of assessment development is compatible with Master's Degree Criteria 1, 2, and 3 described on pages 12-14 of this paper, as well as Criterion 6 on page 16 of this paper.

❖ *Reflection on practice.* Critical to success in NBPTS assessments is the ability of teachers to reflect on their practice, to explain what they do and why they do it. Many teachers entering a master's program will struggle for language to discuss their practice. Reflection must be developed, as a way to make visible the invisible, to allow teachers to examine their practice and particularly, to explore their reasons for making choices. Of particular importance in developing reflection are two of Shulman's points about professional practice. First, reflection assists teachers in exploring the moral purpose that guides them. And second, it allows them to learn from experience, examining the judgments they make "when design and chance collide."

Reflection should be the hallmark of the graduate *faculty's* practice as well—and faculty should look for ways to share their reflection process with students, modeling what they ask students to demonstrate. The process of reflection refers to Master's Degree Criteria 2 and 5 described on pages 13 and 15 of this paper.

❖ *Collaborative inquiry.* A mark of advanced scholarly work is a focus on inquiry, raising and pursuing questions that can lead to

improvement of teaching and learning. Master's programs benchmarked to National Board standards will recognize that accomplished teaching requires collaboration between the teacher and other teachers, between the teachers and other professional and nonprofessional staff, between school and home, between school and community, and between graduate students and graduate faculty. They will engage teachers not simply in completing an action research course to meet a program requirement, but in seeing action research as a continuous cycle—the way they will practice their craft for the rest of their careers. This process is included in suggested Master's Degree Criteria 2 and 3 described on pages 13 and 14 of this paper.

- *Assessment Center exercises.* The kinds of tasks and activities that teachers engage in as they pursue the master's degree need to be focused on the conceptualization of the knowledge and practice of advanced or accomplished teaching. In effect, tasks within the program allow teachers to develop and practice the skill of linking theoretical/conceptual understanding to professional practice. For example, Alverno, drawing upon its conceptualization of the advanced teacher as agent of change and curriculum leader, asks students not merely to read and create literature reviews of, say, P-12 practice in performance assessment; students in the "Frameworks for Assessment Practice" course also create a mini-workshop for a group of teachers at their own school sites, videotape the workshop, and bring it to class for critique by their peers (Diez, 1996). Master's Degree Criteria 2 and 5 described on pages 13 and 15 of this paper incorporate this process.

- *Portfolio development.* Master's programs based on a conceptualization of the knowledge and practice of advanced or accomplished teaching can use portfolio technology to assist teachers in developing a rich image of their goals, knowledge, and practice. Some care must be taken here to assure that the portfolio is a vehicle for making visible the teacher's practice; a danger to avoid is making the requirements for a portfolio define or control that practice. Graduate faculty must consider how they might influence their institutions, for example, in pioneering the use of teaching portfolios for faculty review, tenure, and promotion processes. The portfolio assessment process is included in Master's Degree Criterion 3 described on page 14 of this paper.

- *Development of a learning community.* If master's students are to take back to their practice new ways of creating communities of learning, then it is important that their master's program models

the development of a learning community. The conceptualization of a program might, for example, highlight the kinds of responsibilities that advanced teachers assume in any learning context. Alverno's program also focuses on the notion of professional discourse as including not only the rich resources available in books, journals, ERIC microfiche cards, and conferences, but also the ongoing collaborative interaction among colleagues at the school site and in the master's classroom. This process is included in Master's Degree Criteria 2, 4 and 5 described on pages 13 and 15 of this paper.

All of the above processes are incorporated within Master's Degree Criterion 1 described on page 12 of this paper.

Implications and Questions

In a limited number of pages it is not possible to address many of the other issues involved in rethinking master's degrees for practicing teachers using the standards and processes of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In this closing section, we suggest additional questions that need to be addressed, and we invite feedback on these and other issues.

1. What might make it difficult to design and/or implement such master's degrees?

How does the structure of diverse institutions (e.g., those with a separate graduate school that serves and/or controls both arts and sciences and education programs) make it more or less difficult to do so? How does the culture of the SCDE (e.g., as a collaborative learning community, as a bureaucracy, as a collection of individual entrepreneurs) affect the possibilities? What aspects of the policy climate of a state might impact an institution's ability to design such master's degrees?

2. What is the impact of the diversity of SCDEs as we look at the design and implementation of new master's degrees for practicing teachers?

What issues would affect the possibilities in different kinds of institutions, i.e., large research institutions, state universities, and liberal arts institutions? Does the affiliation of the institution as public or private make a difference in its ability to move into new models of master's degrees for practicing teachers?

3. How might the development of criteria for the design and implementation of master's degrees to be compatible with the standards and processes of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards influence the revision of advanced standards for the accreditation of teacher education programs at the graduate level?

The current NCATE standards clearly address preservice preparation much more clearly and thoroughly than they address advanced programs. How would NCATE unit standards be affected, or should they be, by the design and implementation of this new master's? Should NCATE unit standards be aligned with the standards and processes of NBPTS? What should be the relationship between NCATE unit standards and the six criteria we propose for master's degree programs?

4. What are the implications of the requirements for faculty in the design and implementation of new master's degrees for practicing teachers?

To what degree should faculty in these master's programs be involved in K-12 schools? Ultimately, should faculty in such programs be themselves National Board certified teachers? How might clinical faculty, if any, function in such programs?

5. What are the characteristics of candidates who will take these new master's degrees for practicing teachers?

Many teachers can only pursue a master's degree part-time, combining it with their work and family responsibilities. Many already have established themselves as competent professionals and leaders in their districts. How can the design of the program recognize both their needs and their strengths? What models for candidate participation are most appropriate in the design and implementation of new master's degrees for practicing teachers? If candidates are expected to complete the program as cohorts, what are the benefits and drawbacks? (For example, are students in particular circumstances excluded?) If candidates are expected to participate in the program as teams from schools, what are the advantages and drawbacks?

6. Given the focus of some programs, particularly in the Holmes Partnership institutions, on extending preservice preparation to a fifth or sixth year and awarding a master's degree as the degree of initial licensure, what incentive would there be for teachers to pursue an "advanced" master's degree as a form of continuing professional development?

Should, or how can, the structure of the degree be rethought? Can this new master's "build upon" a fifth- or sixth-year master's? Should it? How does this new master's impact state licensure requirements?

7. If institutions develop master's degrees compatible with the standards and processes of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, how should they use data about how well their graduates do when those teachers stand for the National Board Certification process?

8. In the development of a new master's degree, how should content knowledge be included or addressed?

The National Board standards and processes emphasize depth of content knowledge. How can education faculty developing master's degree work for accomplished teachers work collaboratively with liberal arts faculty to incorporate strong subject area study? How should such subject area study focus on pedagogical content knowledge that uses the standards documents from both the learned societies and the National Board?

9. Will tinkering with current master's programs be sufficient to meet the standards of high-quality master's degrees?

Closing Thoughts

The significant efforts undertaken to promote the professionalization of teaching since *A Nation Prepared* (1986) make the present a key window of opportunity to work on the reform of master's degree programs in education. The emergence during that time of revised standards for teacher education accreditation (NCATE) and of new standards for both beginning teacher performance (INTASC) and accomplished teaching (NBPTS) help to provide a blueprint for the development of teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions across the continuum of professional life.

Our goal in this paper has been to engender thoughtful discussion of the implications of professionalization for master's programs in education. As we have noted, thinking through issues of master's education will not be easily accomplished, nor do we anticipate that modifying a few courses here and there will truly result in a master's that is fully compatible with National Board standards or that meets the criteria we have set forth, except in rare circumstances. It will take the combined efforts of dedicated education faculty and accomplished practitioners to develop the new master's. Together they will face the tensions between

change and status quo, between innovation and rigor, between standards and existing programs, and between accountability and individual interests. This is a task worth doing, not only because it is the right thing to do for the improvement of teaching and learning but because the creation of such a master's degree will only contribute to the relevance of SCDEs and to the professionalization of teachers. We have the opportunity to begin a national dialogue about the meaning and purpose of the most common advanced degree in the field.

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The Authors

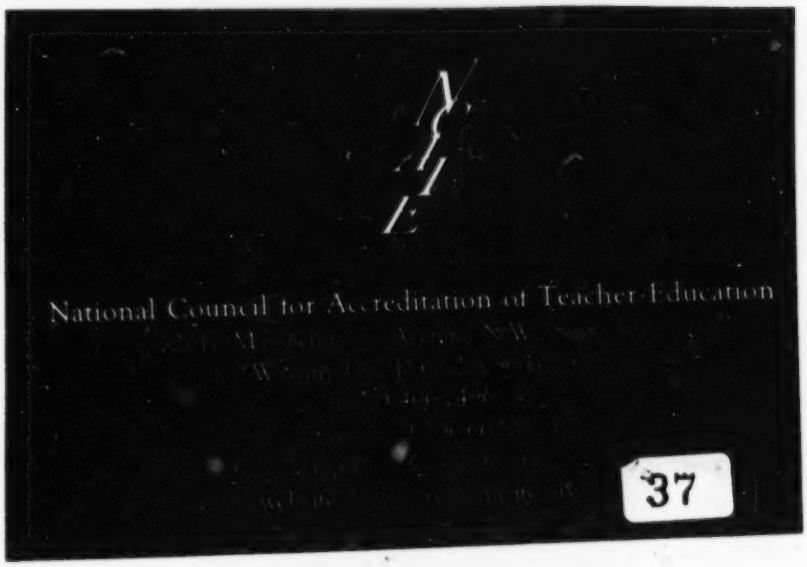
Peggy Blackwell serves as a Professor of Educational Administration and was formerly Dean of the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. Dr. Blackwell has received numerous grants, and is presently working with the New Mexico Teacher Learning Community on an OERI Eisenhower grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Currently she serves on the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's Committee on Women's Issues. Dr. Blackwell has published a number of works on education reform issues.

Mary E. Diez is a Professor of Education at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She currently serves as Chair for the Master's of Arts Program, and until recently served as Chair of the Division of Education for Information Studies and Computer Studies. Dr. Diez is a member of advisory councils both regionally, for CESA #1, and locally, for Shalom High School in Milwaukee. She currently has several publications in press, including "Essential Aspects of Teacher Preparation" in *The Role of the University in the Preparation on Teachers* (Falmer International Press), and *Changing the Practice of Teacher Education: Standards and Assessments as a Lever for Change* (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education).

The Editors

Boyce C. Williams is the Vice President for Institutional Relations at the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. She also serves as Project Director of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Technical Support Network, which assists teacher education programs at HBCUs. Dr. Williams is spearheading the NCATE/NBPTS Partnership for Graduate Programs. She has authored articles on diversity and collaboration in teacher education, and was recently a guest editor for the Association for Teacher Education journal *Action in Teacher Education*. She is the editor of the upcoming book, *Telling Our Story: Reforming Teacher Education Through Accreditation* (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education).

Jane Leibbrand is the Vice President for Communications at the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Prior to her role at NCATE, she served as director of off-campus programs for the George Washington University and as director of communications for the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. Ms. Leibbrand taught college freshman English at the University of Georgia and high school English in Virginia.



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